

LCQ8: Hong Kong Health Code

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Junius Ho and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Alfred Sit, in the Legislative Council today (April 6):

Question:

Due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic, normal traveller clearance between Hong Kong and the Mainland has not been resumed for more than two years, and quarantine measures have caused great inconvenience to the flow of relevant personnel. In December last year, the Government, in preparation for quarantine-free travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland, launched the Hong Kong Health Code system to facilitate Hong Kong Health Code users to transfer their personal data, including their COVID-19 nucleic acid test results and vaccination records, through the system to the "Guangdong Health Code" (Yuekang Code) system for the purpose of health declaration upon entry to Guangdong Province. However, quite a number of members of the public have relayed that the procedures for applying for registration of an Hong Kong Health Code account are complicated, and some people are even unable to apply successfully for registration of an account. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of applications for account registration received, approved and rejected by the Government since the launch of the Hong Kong Health Code system;

(2) whether it has compared the functions, operations as well as the merits and demerits of the Hong Kong Health Code system with those of the "Yuekang Code" system; if so, of the details; and

(3) given that users of the Hong Kong Health Code system need to interface with the "Yuekang Code" system through the system's code conversion function when travelling between Hong Kong and the Mainland, whether the Government will explore introducing an Hong Kong Health Code that is mutually recognised by Hong Kong and the Mainland, or allowing users of the Hong Kong Health Code system to directly use the "Yuekang Code" system, so as to obviate the need for going through the process of code conversion between the systems?

Reply:

President,

My reply to Dr the Hon Ho's question is as follows:

(1) The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) launched the Hong Kong Health Code system on December 10, 2021. Members of the public can register a real-name account and apply for the Hong Kong Health Code via the Hong Kong Health Code system website using computers or smartphones in

preparation for the gradual resumption of normal cross-boundary travel with the Mainland in the future. Some users relayed that they encountered problems during the initial stage after the launch of the system. Taking into account the public's views, we have optimised the system by adding some new functions such as simplifying the "Forget Password" function which allows registered users to reset their password by just providing information of their identity document and using the one-time passcode received through SMS. Up till now, over 870 000 members of the public have registered an account, among whom about 700 000 have activated their accounts.

(2) and (3) Hong Kong and the Mainland will take corresponding anti-epidemic measures having regard to consideration factors such as the actual situation of the society. The designs and uses of the Hong Kong Health Code and "YueKang Code" are thus different. Direct comparison could not be made to the functions of the two systems.

The functions and operation of the "YueKang Code" are designed in accordance with the anti-epidemic requirements and regulations of the Mainland. The main purpose of launching the Hong Kong Health Code is to implement a quarantine-free cross-boundary travel arrangement under the joint prevention and control mechanism with the Mainland. Upon the resumption of cross-boundary travel, Hong Kong citizens can use the Hong Kong Health Code to apply for code conversion to the "YueKang Code" for their direct use on entry to the Mainland so as to meet the Mainland's anti-epidemic requirement.

Currently, with the requests made by the applicants of their own accord and their express consent given, the health code systems of the two places will send the personal data, COVID-19 nucleic acid test results and vaccination records provided by the applicants to the other system for health declaration purpose. To ensure successful data conversion between the health code systems of the two places and the capability of handling a large number of code conversion applications, we have been maintaining communication and cooperation with relevant authorities in the Mainland in developing and testing the Hong Kong Health Code system

In addition, in order to facilitate the use of the Hong Kong Health Code system, a new "Continue to Apply for Health Code" button was added in the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app. Users could upload their visit records to the Hong Kong Health Code system and access the Hong Kong Health Code website directly to continue with the application for a Hong Kong Health Code without the need to login again. For visitors from the Mainland, the Hong Kong Health Code system will automatically open a preset account for these inbound visitors to use on their return journey. We have also set up mobile support stations at 25 MTR stations across Hong Kong to assist members of the public in registering a Hong Kong Health Code account and using the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app. When the arrangement for resumption of cross-boundary travel with the Mainland is in place, the Government will also deploy staff at relevant boundary control points to assist passengers in need in performing code conversion in order to ensure a smooth, orderly and safe clearance process.